

Islamic Militancy and Global Insecurity: The Challenge of Boko-Haram in Nigeria

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Doi:10.5901/jesr.2014.v4n1p503

Abstract

The increasing dimension and scope that the Boko-Haram crises has assumed since its emergence in 2009 has necessitated a more critical look at the challenge facing the nation state – Nigeria and indeed the globe. The paper which adopts the desk research argues that even though Nigeria has been faced with series of security challenges before now, the activities of Boko-Haram pose a major and fundamental challenge to her existence and global security. The activities have led to the destruction of lives and properties, and even threatening the corporate existence of the country, and have made Northern Nigeria environment not only uncondusive for investment from within and outside the country, but has also seriously disrupted social life. Against the backdrop of the monumental effects of the Boko-Haram activities, we have recommended among other measures the collaboration of the Nigerian government with the US and other European partners on tackling the menace of the sect; the creation of the Rapid Response Force (RRF) that is well trained, well equipped and highly mobile to deal with these kinds of situations where they may arise in the future and a strong and enhanced predictive intelligence gathering capacity by the nation security forces.

Keywords: Global insecurity, Islamic militancy, predicting policing, global terrorism.

1. Introduction

The bombing of the World Trade Centre in New York, USA on February 26, 1993, and the Twin Towers building in September 11, 2001, expanded the scope and dimension of Islamic militant activities or terrorism on a global scale. The September 11 attacks, often referred to as "September 11 of 9/11 were a series of four coordinated terrorist attacks launched by the late Osama Bin Laden on US main land cities of New York, and Washington D.C . Within two hours, both Towers collapsed with debris and the resulting fires causing partial or complete collapse of all the other buildings in the World Trade Complex (WTC) as well as major damage to ten other large surrounding structures. The Al-Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden cited U.S support of Israel and other reasons for the attack.

Before now, we have had the Munich Massacre, 1972 in the defunct West Germany involving the killings of Israeli hostages and the Lockerbie Bombing of Pan Am flight 103 in December 21, 1988 in Scotland, United Kingdom, where 243 passengers and 16 crew members lost their lives in addition to killing 11 (eleven) people on the ground. This incidence was tagged official terrorism, because it was believed the erstwhile and former strongman of Libya Mohammad Gaddafi sponsored it. Today, terrorist network and groups called Al-Qaeda have emerged across the globe causing destruction of lives and properties of immense proportion. These groups operate in Afghanistan. The group operate with such names as Al-Qaeda Islamic Magheb (AQIM) operating in the Africa and specifically North Africa using the Sahara desert as its coven; the Al-Qaeda in the Arabia peninsula with base in Yemen; Al-Qaeda in Iran; Syria; and Al-Qaeda base in Afghanistan and Pakistan with different cells across the Middle East, Europe, America, Asia and Africa

(particularly in Somali, Algeria, Egypt, Mali Libya and Nigeria).

The concerns of the group are to Islamize the world and exert revenge on Israel occupation of Palestinian lands. Historically, according to Mozaffari (2007) the world Islamism was first used by a French writer at the end of the 17th, Le Petit Robert, 1697. He had used the term to refer only to Islam without any political or ideological coloration. Today, radical Islamist preachers have turned the phrase or term to radical Islamic activities and to commit murder. Murder has no place in Islamic tradition.

No country or region of the world is spared as humanity is experiencing growing problems insecurity arising from Islamic militancy. Worst still, in most emerging democracies in North Africa, the middle East and sub-Saharan Africa, there is a seeming combination of Islamic militancy and political violence and indeed poverty, with the later seriously fueling militancy and consequently insecurity across these regions and the world. In other words, there seem to be a curvilinear relationship between high level or widespread poverty and youth restiveness occasion by Islamic groups.

Islamic militancy in North and West Africa exploded as a global issue after an international consortium of terrorists took hostage a number of gas workers in southern Algeria. Also, most of Africa's terror groups are a product of home grown inspired by corrupt and ineffective governments. The rise of homegrown militant groups provided the fertile ground for the arrival of a greater number of foreign extremist bringing with them expertise and weapons beyond the capacity of local countries security forces.

The use of Islamic militancy in the Sahel Northern Nigeria and the Horn of Africa has elevated attention to this evolving security concerns not only in the sub region but also in the world. According to Ostebo (2012) Islamic militancy refers to Muslim groups and movements that are based on religious preferences seek to enforce religious, social and political norms through violence. By religious preferences he said, are defined as scriptural based interpretations viewed by actors as authoritative. Islamic militancy is different from Islamic movements that seek political change through non violent means or to promote reforms of a religious nature. We find these in Somali's al Shaba; Egypt's Muslim brotherhood and the Taliban group in Afghanistan and Pakistan. However, both groups seem to collaborate in fostering Islam.

In Nigeria, issues linked to politico-religion and widespread poverty has led to the emergence of a number of local militants that have embraced Al Qaeda type ideology. This is the case with the emergence of Boko Haram sect (which means Western Education is sin) and the Ansaru groups. These sects have unleashed a reign of terror on Nigerians and rendered the social, economic and political infrastructure irrelevant. The situation has also made the poorly equipped and funded Nigerian Police Force useless and unleashed insecurity in Northern Nigeria and the Nation in general.

Specifically, the target of the Boko-Haram sect are first, the security personnel who are persecuting members of the group including the cold blood murder of its leader, Mohammed Yusuf in police custody, killing of many of its members and eradication of its centres; two, Christians, for killing Muslims in various parts of the North in the various religious and ethnic crisis that took place during the post two and half decades, and three, Muslims informants and moles "yan chune", who assist government to identify and kill its members. This study attempts to analyse Islamic militancy and the problem of insecurity in the world using Boko Haram sect as the point of reference, or analysis.

2. Methodology

For this study, we relied mainly on desk research, where we analysed journal, newspapers, and other publications on the Boko Haram activities and other Islamic militant groups in Nigeria and the world at large. In it, we adopted content analysis in analyzing data derived from the desk research. The concerns were to examine the security challenges or implications of the Boko-Haram crises in Nigeria and on the basis of these make concrete recommendations for tackling the challenges.

3. Literature Review and Theoretical Exposition

The country Nigeria is in West African and is the size of Texas in USA. It has a population of 140 million (NPC, 2006) but the current projected population is put at 170 million people. It is multi ethnic and multi-lingual society, with a number of religious orientations. While Islam is the dominant religion in the north, there are still a pocket of Christian adherers and animist also. The south west of Nigeria is predominantly Christian but with a good number of Muslim population. However, the South South and South East have 99 per cent of her population, Christians, with a few animist and other traditional worshippers.

Boko-Haram was established in 2002 by Mohammed Yusuf, a self educated activist, who was inspired by Islamic

Muslim Students Society of Nigeria (MSSN) formed in 1954 by Ibrahim al Zakzaki and Jafar Mahmud Adam. His strict enforcement of Sharia Law introduced in Northern Nigeria in the early 2000 helped to radicalize the sect.

The Boko-Haram sect seeks to institute an Islamic state of medieval type that had existed in the old Sokoto caliphate in Northern Nigeria. It believes that secular school system (that is, western education) has indeed brainwashed Nigerians to accept the post-colonial western order, and forget the Islamic ways that had existed before. It is also believed that western education brought with it western culture which came to bastardise the indigenous and cherished traditions of the people. Today, most of the ills that existed are blamed on the emergence of western education. Therefore, the problems of corruption, poverty, unemployment and other social vices came about because of western education, which should be done away with.

Historically, radical Islam is not unknown in Northern Nigeria which was forcibly linked by the British to the Christian majority in the South and merged into the British colony and protectorate of Nigeria in 1914. However, Islamic militancy in Nigeria can be traced to the activities of the Maitatsine sect in Kano, and other areas of Northern Nigeria in the 1980s. The group was described as the forerunner of Islamist militant groups, the Boko-Haram and the Ansaru (Bako, 2012). It came into limelight as a result of the violent and prolonged armed confrontation with the Nigerian security and military agencies. The violent confrontation later spread to other states of the North but were immediately put off or contained by Nigerian security forces. The emergence of these militant groups were unconnected with the desire of the Muslims to embrace Islamic law to govern their lives coupled with the failure of western-trained elites to deliver social and economic services through western secular state functions. There is the contention among the adherers that obedience to God (Allah) engenders peace and progress which their elites were incapable of providing (Isa, 2013). The concern is that most of these Muslims were largely peasants, unemployed or landless proletarians, and therefore aspired to have a society liberated from injustice, inequality, corruption, crime, inefficiency, backwardness, social dislocation and neglect. Therefore, it could be argued here that the popularity of militant Islamist groups or movement in Northern Nigeria can be attributed to the fertile ground sown by these factors, some of which are increased inequality, rising widespread poverty, of failed social services, insecurity and weak authoritarian Nigerian state.

In South East Asia, there is a set founded by Muhammad Ibn al-Wahhab (1702-1791) and rejected all Islamic practices adopted after the Third century of the Muslim era. Wahhab considered it a duty to conquer all other "heretical sect of Islam" practiced among Muslims around the world, (Abuza, 2003).

Similarly, Akbazadeh and Ferthi (2007) have argued that the widely felt sense of insecurity in the West is shared by Muslims both within and outside western societies. In other words, the growing Islamic militancy and the resultant issues of insecurity and measures by western powers have contributed to a pervasive sense among Muslims of being under attack both physically and culturally. These concerns have further influenced Muslims to want to die even defending their cherished beliefs and culture.

Theoretically, the militant activities can be explained using the conflict paradigm as put forward by Karl Marx (1818 – 1883). We can identify three key components in Marx's paradigm. First, is that conflict is a common and ongoing feature of society. Second, is that society is made up of two main groups or classes (the haves and the have-not) with conflicting values and interests. Finally, is that societal conflict occurring between the dominant and subordinates social groups who are in competition over scarce resources.

In Nigeria, the bourgeoisie who come mainly from members of the political, economic, cultural and traditional classes or elites own all the wealth in society. They also own and control the means of production and distribution in the society. These classes appropriate all the wealth of society, while the proletariats are hired as political thugs, election riggers and security guards for use during electioneering campaigns. The unfortunate fact of the matter, is that immediately after the elections, these so called political thugs are done away with and left to perpetuate havoc (armed robbery, kidnapping and assassinations) in the society. Therefore, the failure of members of the political class coupled with the failure of western educated elites to deliver on their social and economic services have led to many youths to become ready tools in the hands of jihadists and Al Qaeda militant groups.

4. Boko - Haram Activities and Global Insecurity

The activities of Nigerian jihadist groups, such as "Boko Haram" and Ansarul Musilimmia have had devastating effects on the socio-political and economic stability of Northern Nigeria. The frequent bombings, and other deadly activities of the Islamic sect, affected hundreds of shop owners, especially southerners are said to have closed their businesses and left the troubled Northern Eastern cities of Maiduguri, Mubi, and others in Yobe State. It is estimated that more than 10,000 shops and stalls in Maiduguri market alone were abandoned by traders who fled the city.

The attacks on Kano have also been very devastating. The city has always been the commercial centre of Western Sudan for the past 500 years. It has been the economic base of Northern Nigeria and even neighbouring countries of Niger Republic, Chad and Cameroun before the evolution of the Nigerian Nation. About 35 per cent of over three million Igbo businessmen and women and traders in the city who engaged in both small and medium scale businesses are reported to have fled to Abuja and to South-East due to the growing insecurity posed by the activities of Boko-Haram.

The use of force by these militant group in their operations potent great risk for the Nigerian State and other countries within the West African sub-region and in indeed the world. This is the case with the Al-Shaba militant group in Somali with destabilizing effects in neighboring Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania and the al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in Mali with it activities affecting Algeria, Tunisia, Mauritania, Libya, Niger Chad and Nigeria. Evidences show that the Boko -Haram sect had their training and technical support from Mali, in the area of Al Qaeda style operation and weaponry.

Islamic insurgency has made it difficult for citizens and even foreigners to exercise their rights of freedom of movement and association. In most areas of Bornu, Yobe and Adamawa States in Nigeria, people cannot gather for any leisure or social activity including marriages because of frequent attacks or the threat of attacks by Boko-Haram militants. Foreigners and their embassies are not spared. The bombing of United Nation (UN) office in Abuja, Nigeria in August 26, 2011, where 18 persons lost their lives and several others injured was a clear example.

The United States of America (US) and other major European nations have continued to issue travel advisory to their citizens and in most cases close their embassies in some part of the world (North Africa Middle East and Asia). Travel advisory to their citizens in specific countries like Mauritania, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Iraq, Pakistan, Syria and Afghanistan have become frequent precautionary measures because of the threat of militant attacks. Nigeria may not have been listed among the countries in spite of the Boko-Haram insurgency but there is the urgent need to guide against this.

In addition, the instability in Nigeria as a result of Boko-Haram activities and the Ansarul group as Foreign Terrorist Organisations under section 219 of the Immigration Act. The argument is that Nigeria is US most important partners in Africa and home to an estimated 170 million people, making it the most populous country in the world. Therefore, the significant interest shared by Nigeria and US have led to the building of a robust bilateral relationship which is of concern to the US. The country is the 13th largest supplier of oil to the global market and the second largest destination of U.S. private investment in Africa, instability in Nigeria is of direct concern to the United States.

The Boko-Haram with its splinter groups, the Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina fi Biladin Sudan (meaning supporters of Islam in the land of Sudan) and others have created insecurity of lives and property. Studies (Njadvara, 2013; Folarin, 2013, Ukoh, 2003 and Zachary, 2003) have shown that the activities or mayhem by the Boko-Haram have destroyed over 8000 lives, and more than 4000 buildings across Northern Nigeria. The militant attack alone in Baga, left more than 2,275 buildings destroyed and 183 bodies of dead victims, including 36 terrorist (Human Right Watch, 2013).

It is on records, that militant activities of Boko-Haram, took control of 25 local government areas in Bornu State out of 27 local government areas and many others in Yobe State. The Magumeri and Gwoza local government areas of Bornu State, because of the peculiar nature (the hilly mountains) and the tacit connivance of some locals with the sect have made it difficult (Alli, 2013). In other words, until recently, when Emergency rule was declared in three states of Bornu, Adamawa and Yobe in May 13, 2013, Boko Haram rendered political activities in them useless. Civil servants could not go to work as they have to run for their dear lives. The institutions and governance structures in most part of these three states were rendered redundant. Even with the amnesty and the claim of continued dialogue by the Nigerian government with the sect Boko Haram has continued to unleash terror on the citizenry. On Tuesday, August 13, 2013, more than 56 worshippers were slaughtered in a mosque in Bornu State (Famutimi, 2013).

The Boko Haram insurgency, which the group says is aimed at creating an Islamic state in the country's main Muslim North has cost more than 8000 lives since its operation in 2009, including by the security forces. In December 25, 2011, men of the Boko Haram sect carried out the bombing of Madalla's St. Theresa Catholic Church in which 43 persons lost their lives. The incidence affected business activities including the popular Madallah markets. Scholars have maintained that its activities are affecting national integration. Boko-Haram by its activities first, targeted security forces and then non-Muslims of southern extraction and to some extent Christians in the North. Their concern was that the non Muslims must leave the North for the Northerners and therefore targeted their properties and whatever has any bearing of the Easterners, the south and south west. Traders who were mainly from the east were targeted and properties destroyed. Within the period there was serious misgiving, mistrust, animosity and resentment among other ethnic groups whose kinsmen had lived in the North for years. It arouses ethnic question and the need for the corporate existence of

Nigeria, particularly against the backdrop of the killings and destructions of properties.

In addition, Boko-Haram activities affected the deployment of members of National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) to the Northern States particularly the states of Adamawa, Bornu, Yobe and Plateau. The NYSC was scheme created in 1973 by the then General Yakubu Gowon administration as a policy of reintegrating Nigerians into one Nigeria. Youths who graduated from universities and polytechnics within and outside the country were mandatorily required to serve the nation for a one year period in states other than their own. This scheme to say the least has been a huge success leading to many youths engaging in intermarriages and others given jobs in states where they had served and because of exemplary performance.

However, since the onslaught of the Boko-Haram in 2009, leading to the killings and maiming of a number of these youths posted to Bornu, Jos, Adamawa and Yobe states, the NYSC scheme and its laudable policy has been seriously questioned. Many scholars and politicians in the south east, south south and south west have been calling for it to be scrapped or the objectives revisited and amended to allow youths to serve in their home states. The seriousness of the insecurity has led the government to redeploy corp members serving in the affected states to other more relatively peaceful states of the federation.

Boko-Haram activities have crippled educational activities in most parts of Adamawa, Bornu and Yobe states. The insurgents have invaded primary and secondary schools, killing scores of children and their teachers in savage attacks unknown in modern history. In the mix of this insecurity, parents have to withdraw their children and wards, some undergraduates of higher institutions in the states affected have also sort admissions in equivalent schools in the south. Governments have been forced to also close down some of the schools in the most notorious areas that the sect has major hold. This has worsened the illiteracy rate in a region where illiteracy rate is as high as 80 percent, with many children roaming the streets.

The cost of terror attacks and the military offensive has made the cost of the already fragile and dysfunctional Nigerian economy unbearable. Boko-Haram attacks telecommunication infrastructure, schools, government buildings and others, all of which requires enormous money to replace. The cost of maintaining the security forces in this volatile region has more than doubled both in men and material.

Boko-Haram crises and anti-insurgency operations and general insecurity had uprooted or displaced over 6000 people in north-eastern Nigeria. The United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) maintained that 6,240 people have taken refuge in Niger Republic for safety reasons. Others from Adamawa have also cross over to Cameroun and Chad republics since the crises started in 2009 (UN, 2013).

Also, the insecurity created by the Boko-Haram sect in Nigeria has made it necessary for the leaders to also contribute troops to Mali's French led intervention force. Today, with the withdrawal of French forces Nigeria has taken the mandate of leading the African intervention force. The Nigerian government made that timely intervention because it was reported that the Boko-Haram insurgents were involved in the broad coalition of terror groups in the Islamic Magreb, who were helping the Tuaregs to topple the Malian government (Okotie, 2013). The operation in Mali is costing the country millions of dollars. The argument is that there is no wasteful spending considering the pre-captive nature of the intervention. The anti-terror war against Boko-Haram, and other armed groups is taking a heavy toll on our finances.

Interestingly also, the state of emergency in the North-East and the accompanying military operations in that axis have the potential of adversely affecting economic activities generally, including agricultural production and food prices as well as consumer demand. Scholars have argued that the insurgency and its activities have the potential of crippling the economy of northern Nigeria, and affecting economic growth, particularly in a period where food production is decreasing in alarming proportion.

There is also the larger threat of instability in the entire Sahel region, where the Al-Qaeda's influence appears to be growing worst. Though the militant Al-Qaeda group seem seriously weakened after the killing of Osama Bin Laden and some of his key lieutenants by the United States special forces, the terrorist network appears to be regaining capacity with the enlisting of regional terror groups like Al-Shaabbah, in the Eastern Horn of Africa, and the Al Qaeda in the Arabian peninsula and our home grown Boko-Haram. This is coupled with the effect of the Arab spring that has created a wave of instability in North Africa and the Middle East. Particularly, splinter groups seem to be emerging in Libya, Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Syria with the possession of heavy weapons.

The general atmosphere of insecurity created in the North by the Boko-Haram sect will for a considerable long time to come discourage investment from within and outside the country. No investor with his or her right senses will put money in an area where it will not yield any return to investment or go into the drain. One of the main facilitating factors for investment to thrive is a conducive environment in terms of infrastructural development and security of lives and property. Where these are lacking, it becomes difficult for would be investors to be attracted to such an area or country.

In other words, a secured and favourable investment climate is a pre-condition for investment. Evaluating a country risk in terms of Economic and Political Risks are too main sources of risk that need to be considered when investing, that is, risks that might result in unexpected investment losses.

In Nigeria a new dimension has been added to the Boko-Haram crises. The sect is increasingly becoming more sophisticated and deadly. Members of the intelligentsia have been discovered to also be members. The recent arrest of a University don in Kogi State University and students recruited, and indoctrinated with jihadist messages and sent to train in the Sambisa Forest in Borno State are evidences of this sophistry of the sect. There is a strong evidence of members of the political elite and traditional rulers as well as clerics who are sponsors and backers of the Islamist sect.

5. Recommendations

The challenge of Boko-Haram in Nigeria has provided the basis to come up with cogent recommendations as the way forward in handling issues such as this and others.

- (i) The Nigerian government must make conscious efforts to dialogue and cooperate with the moderate Muslims in order to win the hearts and minds of the larger Muslim population. It must be noted that over coming Boko-Harm and other Islamist groups won't be an easy task. In the long run, efforts should be made to reduce Boko-Haram ability to recruit new volunteers into its fold. This is in addition to the imperatives of improving governance and fostering equitable development as well as the protection of the lives of the citizens and the guarantee of human rights.
- (ii) Nigerian government must put in place a Rapid Response Squad or a Special Force, specially trained, well equipped and highly mobile to intervene and handle these kinds of crises situations. The absent of this kind of out fit almost made a mockery of the Nigerian government and the security forces in dealing with the militant activities in the Niger Delta until the granting of Amnesty by the Yardua's government in 2009. The same is the situation in Northern Nigeria that has led to the lost of so many lives and property of both civilians and security forces and placing a greater burden on the country's finances. The Police Mobile Force, could have been able to contain this insurgency but for the lack of adequate training and equipment. Beyond the Police Mobile Force, the Boko Haram and the Nigeria crises have necessitated the creation of a Rapid Response Force drawn from the Army, Navy, Air Force and the Police. It should be a highly mobile force, well equipped and well trained for all kinds of situation and terrain. This force must be different from the regular army.
- (iii) The federal government must begin the process of fashioning out a comprehensive long-term anti-terrorist strategy to deal and checkmate likely international terror campaign to Nigeria. Government must evolve a strategy that is back up with legislation from the national assembly to deal with terrorist attacks from outside and those using Nigeria as recruiting ground and conduct to purchase weapons. The absence of this is affecting the trial of Lebanese Hezbollah men arrested in Kano for shopping for weapons for Hezbollah.
- (iv) Nigeria must find a way to enter into collaboration with other developed countries like the United States of America, Britain and other European countries to combat terror threat. Islamic militancy poses a global threat to security and needs a combine effort to tackle it. We do not doubt the capacity of Nigerian security forces to handle security issues, indeed they are doing well, but international security calls for international security agencies networking to tackle global security. In other words, government must seek for the assistance of the US in the area of its know-how in counter-terrorism warfare either through technical assistance, training of our forces, specifically, the Rapid Response Force, mentioned above, intelligence sharing and or direct military cooperation without necessarily compromising our sovereignty.
- (v) Government must as a matter of urgency address or tackle the problems of sprawling poverty and mass illiteracy in the region. The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) put the poverty figures at above 66 percent of which the North is most affected. Researches have shown that the political elites, particularly in the North East of Nigeria have failed in providing the needed socio-economic services and empowerment for the poor thereby making the youths in the region ready tools for recruitment by the Islamic fundamentalists.
- (vi) Nigeria's security and intelligence agencies must incorporate "predicting policing" as a new security strategy in its crime prevention. "Predicting policing" as a new thinking in security management and crime prevention entails special training in the understanding of human behaviour to know their thoughts and direction of thinking and the ability to apprehend criminals before they manifest such behavior that may result into crime. Above all, the Nigeria Security Agencies must strengthen its intelligence gathering capacity to always nib in bud issues that threaten national security and others.

- (vii) The option of Amnesty for Boko-Haram sect members and leaders may not work. The fact that the amnesty programme had minimal success in the Niger Delta crises against the backdrop of trillion of naira spent, does not mean it would success in the North. While the Niger Delta militants and their leaders were willing to accept the offer, the Boko Haram Islamists on the other hand are not ready. Instead they have continued to carry out strings of attacks and killings of innocent lives. The calibers of weaponry, high profile and sophistication of their activities have strong indication of sponsorship from the high and mighty from within and outside the country. These sponsors must be unmasked and prosecuted within the ambit of the law. In the battle against Islamic militancy, there must be no secret cow(s).

6. Conclusion

Boko-Haram activities in Northern Nigeria have the potentials of affecting the prosperity and stability of the country. The dimensions and momentum of the activities examined above provide sufficient evidences to this direction. It is our considered opinion that the activities of the sect must be seriously tackled against the backdrop of their devastating effect on the economy, the polity and global security.

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